

Washington State Judicial Branch 2015-2017 BIENNIAL BUDGET REQUEST

Decision Package

Agency Supreme Court

Decision Package Title Court Operations

Budget Period 2015-2017 Biennial Budget

Budget Level Maintenance Level

Agency Recommendation Summary Text

Funding is requested to more fully support the constitutionally mandated operations of the Washington Supreme Court. Having sustained reductions totaling 17% of its operating budget since 2009, it is increasingly difficult for the Court to carry out its mission.

Fiscal Detail

| Operating Expenditures | FY 2016 | FY 2017 | Total |
|---|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| 001-1 General Fund State | \$ 50,000 | \$ 50,000 | \$ 100,000 |
| Staffing | FY 2016 | FY 2017 | Total |
| FTEs (number of staff requested) | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Package Description

Since 2009, the Washington Supreme Court (Supreme Court) has sustained substantial reductions to its operating budget. In order to achieve reductions totaling 17% of its operating budget, the Supreme Court was forced to freeze staff salaries, reduce department head salaries, eliminate costs resulting from holding court in areas other than Olympia, virtually eliminate funding for Access to Justice programs, and reduce other operating expenditures by as much as 50%.

Over 86% of the non-staff budget is redistributed to central service agencies. These services and the associated costs are established by the central service agencies, and as such are beyond the control of the Supreme Court; they cannot be managed in a manner that would allow for service reductions leading to cost reductions. The remaining 14% of the non-staff budget is dedicated to ensuring that the Supreme Court

can operate. This category includes the costs of telephones, document reproduction, postage and other business necessities.

As noted above, the Supreme Court has implemented budget austerity initiatives to enable it to function within the confines of its legislative appropriations. It is increasingly difficult for the Supreme Court to focus on and carry out its core mission under the present constraints. As an example, normal operating supply purchases have been cancelled due to increased Attorney General litigation costs.

Narrative Justification and Impact Statement

This package contributes to the Judicial Branch Principle Policy Objectives as identified below.

Fair and Effective Administration of Justice in All Civil and Criminal Cases.

Washington courts will openly, fairly, efficiently and effectively administer justice in all criminal and civil cases, consistent with constitutional mandates and the judiciary's duty to maintain the highest level of public trust and confidence in the courts.

The Supreme Court must have adequate base funding in order to carry out its constitutional mandate. Additional funding will enable the Court to operate effectively and efficiently.

Measure Detail

Impact on clients and service

The Supreme Court budget has been reduced to a level that impedes its ability to effectively operate; almost all of the Court's non-staff funding is dedicated to non-controllable costs such as rent, Attorney General services, statewide information technology service costs, and the like.

Impact on other state services

None.

Relationship to Capital Budget

None.

Required changes to existing Court Rule, Court Order, RCW, WAC, contract, or plan

None.

Alternatives explored

The Supreme Court has implemented a number of cost reduction initiatives (see above). However the budget has been reduced to a point that does not allow for efficient and effective operation.

Distinction between one-time and ongoing costs and budget impacts in future biennia

This request is ongoing in nature.

Effects of non-funding

If additional funding is not provided, certain costs will not be paid.

Expenditure calculations and assumptions and FTE assumptions

| Object Detail | FY 2016 | FY 2017 | Total |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Staff Costs | \$ 0 | \$ 0 | \$ 0 |
| Non-Staff Costs | \$ 50,000 | \$ 50,000 | \$ 100,000 |
| Total Objects | \$ 50,000 | \$ 50,000 | \$ 100,000 |